Section 4.4
Aesthetics and Visual Resources
4.4.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and analyzes aesthetic and visual resources associated with the proposed project, General Plan Amendment No. 960 (GPA No. 960). These resources include scenic vistas and viewsheds, scenic highways and scenic/visual resources, such as trees, rock outcroppings and elements of the built environment like historic buildings. This chapter also includes light and glare, which can adversely affect visual resources, ecosystems and the nighttime use of the Palomar Astronomical Observatory (which relies on dark skies for scientific purposes).

4.4.2 Existing Environmental Setting – Aesthetic and Visual Resources

Riverside County encompasses over 7,200 square miles extending roughly 200 miles in width from the Colorado River (Arizona border) to within 14 miles of the Pacific Ocean. Riverside County shares borders with Orange, San Diego, Imperial and San Bernardino Counties. Within Riverside County, there are 26 incorporated cities with individual identities set among a mixture of rural communities, small towns, deserts and open space areas. (For the purposes of GPA No. 960, the cities of Eastvale and Jurupa Valley have been treated as part of unincorporated Riverside County, as the cities did not incorporate until October 1, 2010, and July 1, 2011, respectively, after the date of this project’s CEQA Notice of Preparation. The two other new cities, Wildomar and Menifee, which both incorporated in 2008, are included as municipalities in this EIR.) The various communities within unincorporated areas are defined by the built environment and the surrounding topography, which includes river valleys, lakes, low desert, mountains, foothills and rolling plains.

Since elements of GPA No. 960 occur throughout Riverside County, for visual assessment purposes, Riverside County is divided into eastern and western regions by the San Jacinto Mountains. A deep valley known as the San Gorgonio Pass, formed by the San Jacinto and San Gorgonio Mountains, serves as a natural link between these two areas. The San Bernardino, Little San Bernardino and Pinto Mountains form a portion of Riverside County's northern boundary while numerous mountain ranges, including those in the Santa Rosa Wilderness and Cleveland National Forest, serve as boundaries along the southern and western edges of Riverside County.

A. Baseline Data Sources

Pursuant to CEQA, the descriptions of the physical environmental conditions provided in this EIR are as they exist at the time the issuance of the Notice of Preparation (NOP), that is, April 13, 2009. This environmental
setting constitutes the baseline physical conditions by which the County of Riverside, as Lead Agency under CEQA, determines whether an impact is significant.

Because of the countywide scope and nature of this project and its programmatic EIR, much of the data presented herein cannot all be said to represent a single point in time (i.e., April 13, 2009). In such cases, the data set that is best supported by substantial evidence is used and a discussion of how it is or is not expected to differ from the existing physical conditions would be provided. It should be noted here that ‘substantial evidence’ typically refers to “fact, a reasonable assumption predicated upon fact, or expert opinion supported by fact,” (PRC Section 21080(e)(1)). Further, ‘substantial evidence’ does not include “argument, speculation, unsubstantial opinion or narrative, evidence of social or economic impacts that do not contribute to, or are not cause by, physical impacts on the environment.”

For the scenic and aesthetic resource baseline data presented and used herein, the following sources were determined to be the best-supported substantial evidence available and were used for the reasons stated. Land use data and other environmental data sets are described in their respective chapters elsewhere.

The data sources used herein for this section include: The 2004, 2006 and 2008 Field Reports issued by the California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, in addition to the 2007 aerial photographs of the Riverside County Land Information System. The field reports, which map farmland and describe those previously mapped farmlands that have been converted to more urban uses, are the most recent data available from the State of California, which performs biennial farmland mapping updates as directed by state law. The latest aerial photographs depicted in the Riverside County Land Information System were flown in 2007 and show activity and uses for parcels within Riverside County. Riverside County highways, including scenic highways and roadways are also visible from the photographs. Together the data sources provide the information needed to establish the baseline used in determining potential impacts to aesthetic and visual resources pursuant to the proposed GPA No. 960.

**B. Visual Character**

A scenic vista is a view of an area that is visually and aesthetically pleasing and is generally associated with rural open spaces. This includes viewsheds of water bodies, ridgelines, mountain tops, skylines and other natural features. A viewshed is simply an area of land, water or other environmental element that is visible to the human eye from a fixed vantage point. Scenic and visual resources are generally defined to include the smaller-scale features within a viewshed, such as individual trees or boulders, as well as components of the built environment, such as windmills in rural areas and so on. They can also include, though are not limited to, land formations (natural or cultural modification), rock outcroppings, undisturbed natural areas (e.g., riparian areas, oak woodlands, etc.), open space, view corridors associated with designated scenic routes, points of historic or cultural significance, agricultural areas (e.g., vineyards, citrus groves) and other human-made features.

The following information summarizes the primary aesthetic resources and visual character within Riverside County. Since the project has the potential to affect areas throughout the county, the visual character of Riverside County is depicted and described in a general manner to provide a basic understanding of the major physical features, landmarks and characteristics of Riverside County. Specifies on localized areas expected to be affected by the project are addressed under Section 4.4.5 (Effect of GPA No. 960 on the General Plan and on Aesthetic and Visual Resources), later in this chapter. Additional details may also be found in each of the region-specific Area Plans of the General Plan and also in the 1999 Riverside County Integrated Plan Existing Setting Report.

Based on the descriptions in the 1999 Existing Setting Report, 15 visual analysis areas were identified to facilitate a greater understanding of the unique aspects, features and visual characteristics common in the various regions.
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of Riverside County. The boundaries of the regions are selected to capture areas of common physical characteristics and similar development patterns. Table 4.4-A (Summary of Visual Character and General Changes) provides a brief summary of the visual characteristics of these 15 areas. A more detailed, though dated, examination of Riverside County aesthetic resources for each region or area is included in Section 4.8 of the 1999 Existing Setting Report, which also includes a detailed photo essay.

Since 1999, when the Existing Setting Report was prepared, Riverside County’s visual character has undergone substantial changes in the urban/suburban fringe areas as growth fueled the urbanization of existing suburban areas and the conversion of open, vacant lands to developed uses. According to the State of California, Riverside County, including its cities, accounted for roughly 23% of all new urban areas within California between 2006 and 2008. Between 2000 and 2008, the California Department of Conservation estimates that “developed or built-up land” in Riverside County increased by 60,862 acres. Much of this build up has been concentrated around existing city centers and other urban centers. Areas that have had considerable amount of visual changes associated with growth are noted in Table 4.4-A, below.

1. Western Riverside County

Western Riverside County is loosely bounded by the Santa Ana Mountains and Cleveland National Forest on the west and the San Jacinto Mountains and the San Bernardino National Forest on the east. Topography varies dramatically in this region, ranging from low-lying valleys to rolling hillsides and steep mountainous terrain with large rock outcroppings. Major features of this area include the Santa Ana River basin, Lake Mathews, Lake Perris, Lake Elsinore, Lake Skinner, Vail Lake, Hemet Lake, the San Jacinto River, Murrieta Creek, the Santa Rosa Plateau, the Santa Margarita River and the vineyard/citrus region near Temecula. The Diamond Valley Reservoir south of Hemet is the largest reservoir in Southern California. Western Riverside County includes numerous unincorporated communities as well as the cities of Corona, Riverside, Beaumont, Banning, Norco, Lake Elsinore, Perris, Hemet, San Jacinto, Moreno Valley, Calimesa, Canyon Lake, Murrieta, Wildomar, Menifee and Temecula.

2. Eastern Riverside County

Eastern Riverside County is loosely bounded by the Colorado River on the east and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains on the west. The area includes the San Gorgonio Pass, part of Joshua Tree National Park, Whitewater River the Palo Verde Mesa and the northern end of the Salton Sea. The most urbanized areas in this portion of the county are contained in the Coachella Valley. The valley includes the incorporated cities of Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Indian Wells, Palm Desert, La Quinta, Indio and Coachella. The City of Blythe near the Arizona border is the eastern-most city in Riverside County. The area around Palm Springs is noted for its golf resorts nestled among the Santa Rosa Mountains. The Coachella Valley is also a major source of date palm groves in the U.S. The San Gorgonio Pass, noted for its high winds, is a key source of wind power for Southern California. The vast mountainous terrain of Joshua Tree National Park and desert topography of the Chuckwalla Valley lie between the Coachella Valley, Blythe and the Colorado River.
### Table 4.4-A: Summary of Visual Character and General Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Analysis Area</th>
<th>General Visual Character</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jurupa Valley-Eastvale</td>
<td>Large-lot and low-density single-family residences among rolling hills, as well as medium density residential tracts in Eastvale; increasing industrial uses in Mira Loma, concentrated commercial along Mission Boulevard and Limonite Avenue, commercial uses otherwise scattered; agricultural uses (e.g., dairies and grazing lands); the Santa Ana River flows along the southern boundary of the area. <strong>Since 2000:</strong> The area has seen extensive urbanization with the addition of a number of new housing developments, as well as a number of new commercial developments as well. An elementary school was also established in the area. The City of Eastvale incorporated on October 1, 2010 and the City of Jurupa Valley incorporated on July 1, 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Temescal Valley</td>
<td>Framed by the Santa Ana Mountains and the Gaviilan Hills, predominantly rural land and suburban single-family residences set among open space; mountainous areas are filled with rock outcroppings, scattered oak trees and riparian areas. Some light industrial and commercial along the I-15. <strong>Since 2000:</strong> The area has been subject to new urbanization due to various new home developments and a major commercial retail center (the “Shops at Dos Lagos”). The active portion of El Sobrante Landfill was expanded by approximately 70 acres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Greater Elsinore</td>
<td>The Santa Ana Mountains form the western boundary of this area marked by oak and scrubby pine forests, scattered residences and campgrounds; large-lot residences in the rolling hills east of I-15; lakeside resorts and campgrounds; semi-urbanized in Sedeco Hills and Wildomar; large-scale Specific Plans (e.g., Horsethief Canyon, Trilogy at Glen Ivy, the Retreat, etc.); mineral extraction north of Lake Elsinore. Scattered commercial uses along Grand Ave within Lakeland Village, predominately residential and vacant lots. <strong>Since 2000:</strong> The area experienced growth and urbanization due to new home developments, major commercial retail centers and the addition of schools in the area. Also, the City of Wildomar incorporated July 1, 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Southwestern Riverside County Area</td>
<td>Framed by the Santa Ana Mountains, Santa Margarita and Agua Tibia ranges and the Black Hills; consists of a series of valleys separated by rolling hills; eastern slopes of the Santa Ana Mountains characterized by steep slopes and valleys, citrus and avocado orchards and the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Preserve; large residential lots; rural communities east of Temecula; Vail Lake; equestrian uses on rolling hills; agricultural uses. <strong>Since 2000:</strong> The area saw rapid urbanization as multiple new home and commercial retail developments were added to the Temecula/Murrieta area along with multiple new schools and business park developments. The Wine Country in Temecula has also seen extensive growth during this time period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lake Mathews Area</td>
<td>Region consists primarily of rolling hills, large-lot residential, citrus and vineyards uses; Lake Mathews, significant amounts of natural open space, natural rock outcroppings and Mockingbird Canyon Archeological Site. <strong>Since 2000:</strong> The area saw extensive urbanization due to new home developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Highways 74-79</td>
<td>Large-lot residential uses, agricultural and equestrian uses among low-lying flatlands and rocky peaks; includes Diamond Valley Lake, some scattered single-family residences on smaller lots/mobile homes; some commercial-industrial and community serving uses. <strong>Since 2000:</strong> Both Highways 74 and 79 have seen extensive growth along their routes due to new home developments within the cities of Hemet, Murrieta and Temecula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Menifee Valley</td>
<td>A valley ringed by ridges; rugged rock outcrops; pockets of residential uses on edges of the valley; estate development in surrounding hillsides; some commercial and industrial development; golf courses, residential and some agriculture uses. <strong>Since 2000:</strong> This area has seen extensive urbanization along the I-215 corridor and suburbanization of former agricultural fields beyond. Much of this area is now part of the City of Menifee, which incorporated October 1, 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Perris Valley</td>
<td>Flatlands and adjacent foothills; rural residential and agricultural uses. <strong>Since 2000:</strong> Perris Valley saw extensive urbanization with the addition of multiple new home developments and the Perris Crossing retail shopping center and associated infrastructure. An elementary school and a middle school were also added to the area.</td>
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</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Analysis Area</th>
<th>General Visual Character</th>
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</table>
| 9. Lakeview and Nuevo                                     | Wide variety of geographical features, low-lying valleys, rolling hills and rock mountainous terrain; primarily large-lot rural residential; some public facilities; the San Jacinto River runs through the northern portion of the area.  
**Since 2000:** The area has not experienced a tremendous amount of urbanization; however, a number of residential developments have occurred in the area. |
| 10. San Jacinto Valley                                    | Encompasses San Jacinto Valley and adjacent foothills and mountains; urban development within cities, otherwise medium-density residential development, scattered commercial uses; predominantly agricultural and dairies; the San Jacinto River traverses the area in a northwest-southeast direction; riparian areas along the river; views of mountains, rock outcroppings and sparse, low-lying vegetation.  
**Since 2000:** A number of new housing developments and associated services and infrastructure, including a school, have arisen, along with some commercial development also. |
| 11. Reche Canyon and Lake Perris                          | Reche Canyon consists primarily of mountainous terrain with low-lying vegetation, rock outcroppings and large-lot rural residential uses; rural, agricultural and suburbanizing uses in Highgrove, Badlands and San Timoteo Creek along eastern boundary.  
**Since 2000:** The area has experienced some growth due to urbanization trends, particularly in the Oak Valley area. |
| 12. San Gorgonio Pass                                     | Bordered by the San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains; small town urban uses; San Gorgonio River; Morongo Band of Mission Indians Reservation lands, wind energy facilities, large-lot rural residential and agricultural uses; desert and hillside vegetation.  
**Since 2000:** The Cherry Valley area, as well as areas in and around the cities of Banning and Beaumont, has continued to urbanize with the addition of residential and commercial developments and educational facilities. Additional wind turbines have also been introduced in the Pass, near Whitewater River. “The Morongo Casino, Resort and Spa” was developed in the Cabazon area. |
| 13. Riverside Extended Mountain Area Plan (REMAP)         | Encompasses the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains; mountain peaks, rock outcroppings; numerous springs and streams; vegetation ranging from desert scrub to alkaline forests; rural residential enclaves; scattered community and tourist-related commercial uses; public recreation areas; wilderness areas; panoramic views of the Coachella Valley to the east and low-lying areas of Riverside County to the west.  
**Since 2000:** The area has not experienced a tremendous amount of urbanization, but some residential growth has occurred. |
| 14. Coachella Valley                                      | East of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains; wind turbines, golf-oriented and tourist resort communities; date groves and agricultural uses; desert oasis areas; cove-like communities at base of Santa Rosa Mountains; Whitewater River; Salton Sea State Recreation Area; desert and mountain vistas.  
**Since 2000:** The Coachella Valley region, particularly within and spreading out from the cities, has expanded greatly. Mainly with housing and resort-style residential communities, associated golf courses, businesses and infrastructure. Aquaculture (fish farms) has flourished west of the Salton Sea. Also, the necessary approvals and permits were completely obtained for the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) in October of 2008. The CVMSHCP was adopted to ensure the preservation of sensitive biological resources and open space in the Coachella Valley region of eastern Riverside County. |
| 15. Eastern Riverside County (East of Coachella Valley to the Arizona Border) | Vast expanses of desert scrub; portion of Joshua Tree National Monument; desert mountain ranges; desert wilderness areas; agricultural uses in the Palo Verde Valley; Colorado River; residential and commercial in Blythe.  
**Since 2000:** Some development has occurred in the Blythe and Palo Verde areas, principally residential. A new power plant also occurs in Blythe. |


C. Nighttime Light and Glare

Light pollution may most simply be described as the alteration of natural light levels in the outdoor environment due to artificial light sources. More commonly, it is taken to mean excessive or obtrusive artificial light. The International Dark-Sky Association defines light pollution as, “any adverse effect of artificial light including sky glow, glare, light trespass, light clutter, decreased visibility at night and energy waste.” Some sources, such as the
U.S. National Park Service, delineate it as artificial illumination of the night sky decreasing the visibility of stars and other natural sky phenomena. The term also includes the incidental or obtrusive aspects of outdoor lighting, such as glare (visual impairment), trespass into areas not needing lighting, use in locations or at times when lighting is not needed and disturbance of the natural nighttime landscape. Night lighting and glare can affect human vision, navigation and other activities. In particular, excessive night lighting can lead to skyglow, which interferes with the operation of astronomical observatories. Light pollution can also interfere with nocturnal wildlife, particularly night-hunting or foraging animals, such as owls, rodents and others.

Since the early 1980s, a global dark-sky movement has emerged as part of a campaign to reduce the amount of light pollution. With the renewed focus on energy conservation and greenhouse gas emission reduction, attention is again being turned to the reduction of excessive lighting, which also wastes electricity as surely as a dripping faucet wastes water. U.S. Department of Energy data has demonstrated that approximately 30-60% of energy consumed in lighting is unneeded or excessive and wastes the energy equivalent of over two million barrels of oil each day.

Nighttime lights can create a form of light pollution that adversely affects the natural environment, such as inhibiting nocturnal species’ ability to hunt at night, and the human environment, such as interfering with the functionality of astronomical observatories or causing glare that endangers driving or airplane navigation. A major scientific resource, the Palomar Observatory, is located in San Diego County approximately 5.5 miles south of the Riverside County border. In general, astronomical observatories need to be sited at least 30 to 40 miles away from large, brightly lit areas, such as cities and other urban concentrations, in order to ensure adequate nighttime darkness of the sky. Back when established, over a century ago in 1908, the Palomar Observatory was located in a remote, undeveloped region. However, in the last century, growth and urban development have spread tremendously throughout Southern California, particularly in western Riverside County and the cities of Temecula, Murrieta, as well as within the Coachella Valley.

It is to be expected that the minimization of nighttime light pollution within the region surrounding the observatory is essential to its operation. To aid in accomplishing this, the County of Riverside enforces Ordinance No. 655 (Regulating Light Pollution). This ordinance establishes two zones for specific lighting controls based on distance from the Observatory. As shown in Figure 4.4.1 (Countywide Palomar Restriction Zones A and B), Zone A encompasses a sphere with a 15-mile radius; Zone B encompasses a 45-mile radius from the Observatory. The intent of the ordinance is to restrict the permitted use of certain light fixtures that emit into the night sky undesirable light rays which have a detrimental effect on astronomical observation and research.

D. Scenic Highways and Roadways

Scenic vistas and natural features, including low-lying valleys, mountain ranges, ridgelines, rock formations, rivers and lakes are often enjoyed via Riverside County’s many roadways. Due to the visual significance of many of these areas, certain roadways within Riverside County have been officially recognized as either ‘eligible’ or ‘designated’ State or County scenic highways. Table 4.4-B (Summary of State and County Eligible and Designated Scenic Highways), below, outlines these highways; they are shown graphically in Figure 4.4.2 (Riverside County Scenic Highways). Development along the designated scenic highways and roadways is managed to preserve the areas’ scenic qualities.

Since 2000, the State of California has not designated any new State scenic highways nor has the State of California added any roadways within Riverside County to the State-Eligible Highways list. Additionally, Interstate 10 (San Gorgonio Pass and Western Coachella Valley: San Bernardino County line to Calimesa, through to Indian Wells) was removed from the State Eligible Scenic Highways list. While a number of roadways within Riverside County remain as County-eligible scenic highways, no new roadways have been officially designated as County scenic highways.
Figure 4.4.1

MT. PALOMAR NIGHT TIME
LIGHTING POLICY AREA

Disclaimer: Maps and data are to be used for reference purposes only. Map features are approximate and not necessarily accurate to surveying or engineering standards. The County of Riverside makes no warranty, representation or guarantee as to the content (the source is often third party), accuracy, completeness or correctness of any of the data provided and assumes no legal responsibility for the information contained on this map. Any use of this product with respect to accuracy and precision shall be the sole responsibility of the user.

Data Source: Riverside County (2020)
4.4.3 Policies and Regulations Addressing Aesthetic and Visual Resources

A. State and Federal Regulations

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) State Scenic Highway Program provides for the designation of scenic or eligible scenic highways, as well as scenic corridors. Scenic corridors are evaluated based on existing scenic areas adjacent to and visible from (but not within) the highway right-of-way and featuring primarily scenic and natural features. Topography, vegetation, viewing distance and jurisdictional lines determine corridor boundaries. Caltrans scenic highway considerations are based upon “how much of the natural landscape a traveler sees and the extent to which visual intrusions impact the scenic corridor.” As part of the designation process, the local governing body must develop and implement a corridor protection program containing the following five legislatively-required elements:

1. Regulation of land use and density of development (i.e., density classifications and types of allowable land uses).
2. Detailed land and site planning (i.e., permit or design review authority and regulations for the review of proposed developments).
3. Control of outdoor advertising (i.e., prohibition of off-premise advertising signs and control of on-premise advertising signs).
4. Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping (i.e., grading ordinances, grading permits, design review authority, landscaping and vegetation requirements).
5. The design and appearance of structures and equipment (i.e., design review authority and regulations for the placement of utility structures, microwave receptors, wireless communication towers, etc.).

B. Riverside County Regulations

As discussed above, the following existing regulations and policies are intended to protect existing aesthetic and visual resources within Riverside County. These policies are not part of the proposed GPA No. 960; rather, they are policies that have been previously approved by the County of Riverside as separate discretionary actions.

**Ordinance No. 655 - Regulating Light Pollution:** The intent of this ordinance is to restrict the permitted use of certain light fixtures emitting into the night sky undesirable light rays which have a detrimental effect on astronomical observation and research. Ordinance No. 655 defines lighting sources, establishes the type and manner of installation and operation of lighting and details lighting prohibitions. Ordinance No. 655 applies to restriction zones Zone A and Zone B. These radius zones are based on distance from the Palomar Observatory. Zone A encompasses a 15 miles radius and Zone B encompasses a 45-mile radius around the observatory. See Figure 4.4.1.
Ordinance No. 915 - Regulating Outdoor Lighting: The intent of this ordinance is to establish a countywide standard for outdoor lighting that would generally prohibit light trespass and protect the health, property and well-being of residents within the unincorporated Riverside County. This ordinance will regulate light trespass in those areas that fall outside of the 45-mile radius of Ordinance No. 655, mentioned above. Ordinance No. 915 requires all outdoor lights to be adequately shielded and directed such that no direct light falls outside the parcel of origin or onto public rights-of-way.

Ordinance No. 460 - Regulating the Division of Land and Ordinance No. 461 - Road Improvement Standards and Specifications: The road standards provided in Ordinance No. 461 conform to the Circulation Standards and Specifications:

Standards and Specifications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordinance No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>460</td>
<td>Road Improvement Standards and Specifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>461</td>
<td>Road Improvement Standards and Specifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4-B: Summary of State and County Eligible and Designated Scenic Highways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Hwy/State Route</th>
<th>Region / Areas Affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Designated</td>
<td>State Route 243 and State Route 74</td>
<td>San Gorgonio Pass, Western Coachella Valley and San Jacinto Mountains: Banning City limit to SR-74, SR-74 from San Bernardino National Forest to SR-111 in Palm Desert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Designated</td>
<td>State Route 62</td>
<td>Western Coachella Valley: Interstate 10 to San Bernardino County line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Eligible</td>
<td>State Route 74</td>
<td>From San Jacinto Mountains, through San Jacinto Valley, Harvest Valley/Winchester, Sun City, Menifee and Elsinore Valleys: Orange County line to El Cariso and continuing east towards the City of Hemet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Eligible</td>
<td>Interstate 15, State Route 91 and State Route 71</td>
<td>Temescal Valley, Lake Elsinore and Southwestern Riverside Co. South from north of Corona to the San Diego County Line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Eligible</td>
<td>Interstate 10</td>
<td>San Gorgonio Pass and Western Coachella Valley: San Bernardino County line to Calimesa, through to Indian Wells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Eligible</td>
<td>State Route 111</td>
<td>Eastern Coachella Valley: Salton Sea (Bombay Beach) to SR-195 near Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Eligible</td>
<td>State Route 79</td>
<td>San Jacinto Mountains: From the SR-371 intersection in the Aguanga area, south to the San Diego County line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>US Highway 95</td>
<td>Palo Verde: From I-10 to the San Bernardino County line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>Interstate 10</td>
<td>Palo Verde, Desert Center, Eastern Desert Area and Eastern and Western Coachella Valley: From the Arizona border at the Colorado River to the SR-62 junction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>Dillon Road</td>
<td>Western Coachella Valley: North from I-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>Oak Glen Rd/ Beaumont Ave</td>
<td>San Gorgonio Pass: San Bernardino County line to Beaumont Ave. to the Beaumont city limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>San Timoteo Cyn Rd / Redlands Blvd</td>
<td>San Gorgonio Pass and Reche Canyon/Badlands: From the Beaumont city limit to the Moreno Valley city limit to SR-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>Gilman Springs Road/ State Route 79</td>
<td>Reche Canyon/Badlands and San Jacinto Valley: Moreno Valley city limit to Lamb Canyon Road (SR-79), south of the Beaumont city limit to the Gilman Springs Rd intersection; and continuing south towards SR-74 and the City of San Jacinto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>Ramona Expressway</td>
<td>Reche Canyon/Badlands, Lakeview/Nuevo, San Jacinto Valley: I-215 east towards the City of San Jacinto to SR-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>Interstate 215</td>
<td>Southwestern Riverside County, Sun City and Menifee Valley: SR -74, Menifee Rd, McCall Blvd, I-215 South to I-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>State Route 79</td>
<td>Southwestern Riverside County and San Jacinto Mountains: I-215 from Temecula east to SR-371 at Aguanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Eligible</td>
<td>Cajalco Rd, El Sobrante Rd, Mockingbird Cyn Rd and La Sierra Ave</td>
<td>Lake Mathew / Woodcrest: I-15 to Lake Elsinore, around Lake Mathews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Riverside County General Plan, Figure C-9, “Riverside County Scenic Highways,” 2003 and updated per the California Eligible and Officially Designated Routes, 2014, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/cahisys.htm.
Element of the General Plan for the purpose of establishing proper standards, specifications and directions for design and construction of any road or other land division improvements required in the unincorporated territory of Riverside County. In regulating road rights-of-way, Ordinance No. 461 requires that the rights-of-way be kept clear for the traveling public, subsequently protecting the visual aspects of scenic highways.

Ordinance No. 460 regulates the division of land for unincorporated Riverside County including the necessary improvements associated with the division of land. As such, the ordinance promotes maintaining visual resources by requiring that subdivisions comply with “Street Tree” provisions as well as installation requirements for electrical and communication facilities, specifically when located near scenic highways.

Together, Ordinance No. 460 and Ordinance No. 461 aid in the preservation and protection of existing aesthetic and visual resources while also potentially adding new visual resources to Riverside County when street trees are required.

Ordinance No. 348 - Land Use: Riverside County’s Land Use Ordinance establishes allowable uses of land and sets standards for what and how land may be developed. The ordinance protects the people and property of Riverside County from development of unsuitable land uses and aims to ensure that built areas are developed safely and with minimal conflict with surrounding lands. In regards to Aesthetics and Visual Resources, Ordinance No. 348 specifically requires that all Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS) maintain specific setbacks from all State or County eligible or designated scenic highways, thereby reducing potential adverse impacts to scenic highways. The setback distance is determined by the actual location of the highway. Ordinance No. 348 also identifies requirements for landscaping associated with development proposals. The landscaping of development projects enhances the visual character and aesthetic quality of a site and its surroundings.

Ordinance No. 457 - Building Codes and Fees Ordinance: This ordinance regulates grading, buildings and structures within Riverside County. In relation to the Aesthetics and Visual Resources, Ordinance No. 457, enhances the existing visual character and aesthetic quality of development sites and the surrounding areas by requiring development projects that involve cut and fill slopes of particular vertical heights to be landscaped in order to provide proper erosion control measures. Erosion control landscaping plans must be submitted to and approved by the Riverside County Building and Safety Department prior to installation. Landscaping the slopes provides stability for the slope while also providing aesthetic enhancements to the site and surrounding area as well.

County Design Guidelines: Design guidelines provide development guidance for the congruent aesthetic character of a community as envisioned by the community. This may include development guidance for scale, intensity, architectural design, landscaping, light fixtures, sidewalks, trails, community logo, signage program and other visual design features of a project. Riverside County’s current community guidelines include the following documents:

- Community Center Design Guidelines (Appendix J of the General Plan)
- Countywide Design Standards and Guidelines
- Third and Fifth District Design Guidelines
- Design and Landscape Guidelines for Development in the 2nd Supervisorial District
- Citrus Vineyard Policy Design Guidelines
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Public Review Draft

February 2015

—Bermuda Dunes Design Guidelines
—Desert Edge Design Guidelines
—Lakeview Nuevo Design Guidelines
—Temescal Valley Design Guidelines
—Vista Santa Rosa Design Guidelines
—Rubidoux Village Design Workbook
—Landscape Review Design Guidelines
—Live Oak Tree Management Guidelines
—Mecca Design Guidelines
—Thermal Design Guidelines
—Temecula Valley Wine Country Design Guidelines

County Resource Guidelines: Resource guidelines provide guidance for the protection, maintenance and beautification of the county. These guidelines include requirements for the protection of existing oak trees on parcels proposed for development, as well as water-efficient landscaping for development proposals. Current Riverside County Resource Guidelines include the Landscape Review Design Guidelines (Ordinance No. 859) and County Oak Tree Management Guidelines.

C. Existing Riverside County General Plan Policies

The following policies are already part of the General Plan and are not part of the project, GPA No. 960. Rather, these policies are considered to play a role in ensuring any potential environmental effects are avoided, reduced or minimized through their application on a case-by-case basis. The County of Riverside has existing programs in place that ensure applicable policies are imposed once a development proposal triggers a specific policy or policies. The need for specific policies is determined through subsequent CEQA analysis performed for site-specific projects. These measures are implemented, enforced and verified through their inclusion into project Conditions of Approval.

1. Land Use (LU) Element Policies

Policy LU 2.1: Accommodate land use development in accordance with the patterns and distribution of use and density depicted on the General Plan Land Use Map (Figure LU-1) and the Area Plan Land Use Maps, in accordance with the following:

a. Provide a land use mix at the countywide and Area Plan levels based on projected need and supported by evaluation of impacts to the environment, economy, infrastructure, and services.
b. Accommodate a range of community types and character, from agricultural and rural enclaves to urban and suburban communities.

c. Provide for a broad range of land uses, intensities, and densities, including a range of residential, commercial, business, industry, open space, recreation, and public facilities uses.

d. Concentrate growth near community centers that provide a mixture of commercial, employment, entertainment, recreation, civic, and cultural uses to the greatest extent possible.

e. Concentrate growth near or within existing urban and suburban areas to maintain the rural and open space character of Riverside County to the greatest extent possible.

f. Site development to capitalize upon multi-modal transportation opportunities and promote compatible land use arrangements that reduce reliance on the automobile.

g. Prevent inappropriate development in areas that are environmentally sensitive or subject to severe natural hazards.

Policy LU 7.1 (Previously LU 6.1): Require land uses to develop in accordance with the General Plan and Area Plans to ensure compatibility and minimize impacts.

Policy LU 7.4 (Previously LU 6.4): Retain and enhance the integrity of existing residential, employment, agricultural, and open space areas by protecting them from encroachment of land uses that would result in impacts from noise, noxious fumes, glare, shadowing, and traffic.

Policy LU 9.3 (Previously LU 8.3): Incorporate open space, community greenbelt separators, and recreational amenities into Community Development areas in order to enhance recreational opportunities and community aesthetics, and improve the quality of life.

Policy LU 14.1 (Previously LU 13.1): Preserve and protect outstanding scenic vistas and visual features for the enjoyment of the traveling public.

Policy LU 14.3 (Previously LU 13.3): Ensure that the design and appearance of new landscaping, structures, equipment, signs or grading within designated and eligible State and County scenic highway corridors are compatible with the surrounding scenic setting or environment.

Policy LU 14.4 (Previously LU 13.4): Maintain at least a 50-foot setback from edge of the right-of-way for new development adjacent to designated and eligible State and County scenic highways.

Policy LU 14.5 (Previously LU 13.5): Require new or relocated electric or communication distribution lines, which would be visible from designated and eligible State and County scenic highways, to be placed underground.

Policy LU 14.6 (Previously LU 13.6): Prohibit offsite outdoor advertising displays that are visible from designated and eligible State and County scenic highways.

Policy LU 14.7 (Previously LU 13.7): Require that the size, height and type of on-premise signs visible from designated and eligible State and County scenic highways be the minimum necessary for identification. The design, materials, color, and location of the signs shall blend with the environment, utilizing natural materials where possible.
Policy LU 14.8 (Previously LU 13.8): Avoid the blocking of public views by solid walls.

Policy LU 16.4 (Previously LU 15.4): Except in unusual circumstances, no wind turbines shall be sited on lands in excess of 25% of slope.

Policy LU 16.5 (Previously LU 15.5): Except in unusual circumstances, restrict lands in excess of 25% of slope from uses associated with wind turbine development, such as access roads, except in specific instances where site-specific investigation indicates that no adverse impacts or increased hazard would result, and that visual impacts can be mitigated.

Policy LU 16.12 (Previously LU 15.12): Require the design and location of commercial wind energy developments to mitigate visual impacts. Issues which may be included in the review may be, but not necessarily limited to, the following list, depending on turbine types, densities and siting:

a. Color of turbines.

b. Location and design of associated facilities such as roads, fencing, non Public Utilities Commission regulated utility lines, substations and maintenance buildings to minimize intrusion or disruption of the landscape.

c. Minimizing of disturbed ground and roadway, and restoring of the surface to natural vegetation.

d. Prohibition of brand names or advertising associated with wind turbines visible from any scenic highways or key viewpoints.

e. Need for interpretation and/or visitors center located at the end of the view shed of turbines.

Policy LU 16.13 (Previously LU 15.13): Require design measures for commercial wind energy development on sites near official or eligible State or County scenic highways designated (Figure C-7, Circulation Element) by Riverside County, and sites within those areas identified as “critical” and “very critical” by Environmental Impact Report No. 158. Issues which may be included in the review may be, but are not necessarily limited to, the following list, depending on turbine types, densities, and siting:

a. Except in unusual circumstances, no wind turbine would be sited on slopes in excess of 25%; the purpose of this standard is to prevent disturbance and degradation of landforms, and visual scarring by cut and fill, side casting, retaining walls, trenching, and vegetation removal; avoid skyline and ridgeline location.

b. Wind turbines should be set back from scenic highways and viewpoints; set back individual turbines far enough from scenic highways and key viewpoints so they do not obscure or overwhelm distinctive skylines; set back large turbines from small important landmarks so that they do not overwhelm the landform.

c. Coordinate color schemes for all developments; avoid mixing colors within a particular array unless to subordinate a particular turbine type or to provide safety markings; limit use of color patterns as accent for key clusters or individual turbines; consider aviation safety coloration and lighting as may be required by the FAA.
Policy LU 19.1: Where appropriate, use any adopted Density Transfer Program to help implement Rural Village Overlay Study Areas and the Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Program.

Policy LU 21.1 (Previously LU 17.1): Require that grading be designed to blend with undeveloped natural contours of the site and avoid an unvaried, unnatural, or manufactured appearance.

Policy LU 21.3 (Previously LU 17.3): Ensure that development does not adversely impact the open space and rural character of the surrounding area.

Policy LU 26.1 (Previously LU 20.2): Require that development be designed to blend with undeveloped natural contours of the site and avoid an unvaried, unnatural, or manufactured appearance.

Policy LU 26.3 (Previously LU 20.4): Ensure that development does not adversely impact the open space and rural character of the surrounding area.

Policy LU 28.6 (Previously LU 22.6): Require setbacks and other design elements to buffer residential units to the extent possible from the impacts of abutting agricultural, roadway, commercial and industrial uses.

Policy LU 28.10 (Previously LU 22.10): Require that residential units/projects be designed to consider their surroundings and to visually enhance, not degrade, the character of the immediate area.

Policy LU 29.9 (Previously LU 23.9): Require that commercial development be designed to consider their surroundings and visually enhance, not degrade, the character of the surrounding area.

Policy LU 30.8 (Previously LU 24.8): Require that industrial development be designed to consider their surroundings and visually enhance, not degrade, the character of the surrounding area.

Policy LU 31.5 (Previously LU 25.5): Require that public facilities be designed to consider their surroundings and visually enhance, not degrade, the character of the surrounding area.

2. Circulation (C) Element Policies

Policy C 5.3: Require parking areas of all commercial and industrial land uses that abut residential areas to be buffered and shielded by adequate landscaping.

Policy C 19.1: Preserve scenic routes that have exceptional or unique visual features in accordance with Caltrans’ Scenic Highways Plan.

Policy C 20.10 (Previously C 20.8): Avoid, where practicable, disturbance of existing communities and biotic resource areas when identifying alignments for new roadways, or for improvements to existing roadways and other transportation system improvements.

3. Open Space (OS) Element Policies

Policy OS 5.6: Identify and, to the maximum extent possible, conserve remaining upland habitat areas adjacent to wetland and riparian areas that are critical to the feeding, hibernation, or nesting of wildlife species associated with these wetland and riparian areas.
Policy OS 9.3: Maintain and conserve superior examples of native trees, natural vegetation, stands of established trees, and other features for ecosystem, aesthetic and water conservation purposes.

Policy OS 9.4: Conserve the oak tree resources in the county.

Policy OS 21.1: Identify and conserve the skylines, view corridors and outstanding scenic vistas within Riverside County.

Policy OS 22.1: Design developments within designated scenic highway corridors to balance the objectives of maintaining scenic resources with accommodating compatible land uses.

Policy OS 22.2: Study potential scenic highway corridors for possible inclusion in the Caltrans Scenic Highways Plan.

Policy OS 22.4: Impose conditions on development within scenic highway corridors requiring dedication of scenic easements consistent with the Scenic Highways Plan when it is necessary to preserve unique or special visual features.

Policy OS 22.5: Utilize contour grading and slope rounding to gradually transition graded road slopes into a natural configuration consistent with the topography of the areas within scenic highway corridors.

D. Proposed New or Revised Riverside County General Plan Policies

The following revision to existing General Plan policies is included as part of GPA No. 960. The revision is intended to enhance the policies’ implementation and comprehensive use.

1. Land Use (LU) Element Policies

Policy LU 4.1: Require that new developments be located and designed to visually enhance, not degrade the character of the surrounding area through consideration of the following concepts:

   a. Compliance with the design standards of the appropriate Area Plan land use category.

   b. Require that structures be constructed in accordance with the requirements of the County’s zoning, building and other pertinent codes and regulations.

   c. Require that an appropriate landscape plan be submitted and implemented for development projects subject to discretionary review.

   d. Require that new development utilize drought tolerant landscaping and incorporate adequate drought-conscious irrigation systems.

   e. Pursue energy efficiency through street configuration, building orientation, and landscaping to capitalize on shading and facilitate solar energy, as provided for in Title 24 Part 6 and/or Part 11 of the California Administrative Code of Regulations.

   f. Incorporate water conservation techniques, such as groundwater recharge basins, use of porous pavement, drought tolerant landscaping, and water recycling, as appropriate.
g. Encourage innovative and creative design concepts.

h. Encourage the provision of public art that enhances the community’s identity, which may include elements of historical significance and creative use of children’s art.

i. Include consistent and well-designed signage that is integrated with the building’s architectural character.

j. Provide safe and convenient vehicular access and reciprocal access between adjacent commercial uses.

k. Locate site entries and storage bays to minimize conflicts with adjacent residential neighborhoods.

l. Mitigate noise, odor, lighting, and other impacts on surrounding properties.

m. Provide and maintain landscaping in open spaces and parking lots.

n. Include extensive landscaping.

o. Preserve natural features, such as unique natural terrain, arroyos, canyons, and other drainage ways, and native vegetation, wherever possible, particularly where they provide continuity with more extensive regional systems.

p. Require that new development be designed to provide adequate space for pedestrian connectivity and access, recreational trails, vehicular access and parking, supporting functions, open space, and other pertinent elements.

q. Design parking lots and structures to be functionally and visually integrated and connected.

r. Site buildings access points along sidewalks, pedestrian areas, and bicycle routes, and include amenities that encourage pedestrian activity.

s. Establish safe and frequent pedestrian crossings.

t. Create a human-scale ground floor environment that includes public open areas that separate pedestrian space from auto traffic or where mixed, it does so with special regard to pedestrian safety.

u. Recognize open space, including hillsides, arroyos, riparian areas, and other natural features as amenities that add community identity, beauty, recreational opportunities, and monetary value to adjacent developed areas.

v. Manage wild land fire hazards in the design of development proposals located adjacent to natural open space.

Policy LU 4.5 (Previously 4.4): Permit historically significant buildings to vary from building and zoning codes in order to maintain the historical character of the county; providing that the variations do not endanger human life and buildings comply with the State Historical Building Code.

Policy LU 7.2 (Previously LU 6.2): Notwithstanding the Public Facilities designation, public facilities shall also be allowed in any other land use designation except for the Open Space-Conservation and Open Space-Habitat land use designations. For purposes of this policy, a public facility shall include all facilities operated by the federal government, the State of California, the County of Riverside, any special district governed by or operating within the County of Riverside or any city, and all facilities operated by any combination of these agencies.
Policy LU 7.6 (Previously LU 6.7): Require buffering to the extent possible and/or maintain a natural edge for proposed development directly adjacent to national forests.

Policy LU 9.1 (Previously LU 8.1): Provide for permanent preservation of open space lands that contain important natural resources, cultural resources, hazards, water features, watercourses including arroyos and canyons, and scenic and recreational values.

Policy LU 9.4 (Previously LU 8.4): Allow development clustering and/or density transfers in order to preserve open space, natural resources, cultural resources, and/or biologically sensitive resources. Whenever possible, development on parcels containing 100-year floodplains and blue line streams and other higher-order watercourses and areas of steep slopes adjacent to them shall be clustered so as to keep development out of the watercourse and adjacent steep slope areas, and to be compatible with other nearby land uses.

Policy LU 12.1 (Previously LU 11.1): Apply the following policies to areas where development is allowed and that contain natural slopes, canyons, or other significant elevation changes, regardless of land use designation:

a. Require that hillside development minimize alteration of the natural landforms and natural vegetation.

b. Allow development clustering to retain slopes in natural open space whenever possible.

c. Require that areas with slope be developed in a manner to minimize the hazards from erosion and slope failures.

d. Restrict development on visually significant ridgelines, canyon edges, and hilltops through sensitive siting and appropriate landscaping to ensure development is visually unobtrusive.

e. Require hillside-adaptive construction techniques, such as post and beam construction, and special foundations for development when the need is identified in a soils and geology report which has been accepted by the County.

f. Encourage the In areas at risk of flooding, limitation of grading and cut and fill to the amount necessary to provide stable areas for structural foundations, street rights-of-way, parking facilities, and other intended uses.

2. Circulation (C) Element Policies

Policy C 20.1: Ensure preservation of trees identified as superior examples of native vegetation within road rights-of-way through development proposals review process. Where the County deems preservation to be infeasible, relocation and/or replacement shall be evaluated by a qualified arborist to ensure that the impacts are mitigated.

Policy C 25.2: Locate new and relocated utilities underground when possible and feasible. All remaining utilities shall be located or screened in a manner that minimizes their visibility by the public.

3. Open Space (OS) Element Policies

Policy OS 5.5: New development shall preserve and enhance existing native riparian habitat and prevent obstruction of natural watercourses. Prohibit fencing that constricts flow across watercourses and their banks. Incentives shall be utilized to the maximum extent possible.
4.4.4 Thresholds of Significance for Aesthetic and Visual Resources

The proposed project would result in a potentially significant impact on aesthetic or visual resources if it would:

A. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

B. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings and historical buildings within a State scenic highway.

C. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or aesthetic quality of a site and its surroundings.

D. Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the areas.

E. Interfere with the nighttime use of the Palomar Astronomical Observatory, as protected through Riverside County Ordinance No. 655.

4.4.5 Effect of GPA No. 960 on the General Plan and on Aesthetic and Visual Resources

A. Method of Aesthetic Analysis

Some components of GPA No. 960 have the potential to affect land use, including some site-specific locations. An evaluation was performed to determine if any of the proposed changes would have the potential to significantly adversely affect a scenic resource within Riverside County, see Appendix EIR-3. First, for those project components for known locations (i.e., Riverside County-initiated land use designation changes, study area and policy area revisions, etc.) existing and proposed land uses were examined for aesthetic compatibility with the existing conditions on and surrounding the sites. Secondly, the proposed changes were evaluated in terms of potential to adversely affect each area or region’s existing scenic values. As a result, all of the GPA No. 960 items with spatial components were classed into one of three categories of potential for aesthetic impacts:

No Effect / Nominal Effect: This category includes land found to be already developed (built out) with existing urban, suburban, industrial, agricultural or rural uses; land already fully disturbed, for example graded, scraped or disked, such that the site’s own natural aesthetics have been lost or extensively altered, and its role in any scenic viewshed would be minimal. Changes to these types of sites would have a nominal effect on an area’s overall viewshed or aesthetics. This category also includes lands that would be fully conserved, for example, parcels going to the Open Space-Conservation Habitat (OS-CH) land use designation. Lands going into designations that do not accommodate development would have no effect on an area’s viewshed or aesthetics.

Minor Effect: This category includes land where the disturbance resulting from any future development would most likely be minor. In some cases, this may include a vacant site that is large enough to accommodate the proposed use while making any site-planning or design allowances necessary to ensure minimal aesthetic impacts occur. An example of this would be a 10-acre, lightly forested parcel in which two single-family homes would be permitted. Each resultant parcel would be large enough to allow situating the pad and structures in locations that avoid a ridgeline or viewshed, stately mature pines, large rock formations and so on.
This category also includes vacant or undisturbed lands that contribute to the existing aesthetic ambiance of an area, but are not essential for a region's overall viewshed or aesthetic. An example of this would be a 20-acre parcel of vacant, undisturbed desert scrub located amongst other similar parcels that have been developed with various single-family residences and light agricultural uses. In such case, any potential aesthetic impacts would result merely from the transition of the site from vacant to developed, rather than affecting a region's overall viewshed. This same principle would hold true for lands partially disturbed or developed, particularly within the many scattered rural and agricultural communities within unincorporated Riverside County. In both cases, future development is generally consistent with both the surrounding area and the region's overall aesthetic. As a result, such changes generally would not represent significant conversion of open space to developed uses.

Possible Effect: This category addresses lands where there is potential for visible effects to aesthetics. Examples include completely undeveloped areas not even accessible by dirt road; vacant parcels of open land with minimal disturbances (e.g., no structures and perhaps only a few dirt roads) located in or adjacent to large areas of open space; or areas with significant, unique or noteworthy aesthetic features on or adjacent to the site (such as at the top of an open bluff, sites with ponds or waterfalls, large rock formations, scenic viewpoints, etc.) This category also includes proposed land uses of substantially greater intensity than that of the surrounding region and regional growth pattern. In general, this category captures locations in which conversion of open space to developed uses could visibly affect a viewshed or major aesthetic resource.

B. Results of Aesthetic Analysis

As a result of the above project analysis (see Appendix EIR-3), the areas proposed for specific land use-related changes as part of GPA No. 960 have been categorized as follows:

No Aesthetic Effect: A total of approximately 28,500 acres encompassing over 800 parcels were found to have no potential for aesthetic effects because they would be designated Open Space-Conservation Habitat (OS-CH) for biological conservation purposes or going to other types of conservation (OS-C or OS-W). This includes 460 parcels within policy areas and 283 parcels being acquired by the Riverside Conservation Authority. See Appendix EIR-3 for further details on these sites.

Of the various policy area and study area changes included in GPA No. 960, four would not have an adverse impact on scenic resources: El Cariso Rural Village Study Area (RVSA), Aguanga RVSA, Anza RVSA and the Agriculture/Potential Development Special Study Area. These four policy items are being deleted as part of GPA No. 960. Thus, their existing Land Use Designations would dictate suitability of any future development proposals. As a result, future development is expected to be less intense than that currently potentially permissible under the existing Study Area policies; aesthetic impacts derived from urbanization would also be lessened. In the case of Anza, a Policy Area would also cover the area formerly subject to the RVSA to further ensure that any future development is appropriate to the area's environmental constraints, including viewshed and aesthetics.

There are no new environmental impacts associated with this category of effect. The existing General Plan land use designations, which remain in effect for these areas, were analyzed under EIR No. 441 prepared for the 2003 RCIP General Plan. Also in this category are the Sky Valley and Chiriaco Summit areas as no land use changes are proposed for either of these under GPA No. 960.

Nominal Aesthetic Effect: A total of approximately 64,500 acres encompassing nearly 7,500 parcels were found to have nominal potential for aesthetic effects. See Appendix EIR-3 for list. This includes approximately 4,000 acres (nearly 440 parcels) proposed to change as a result of Riverside County-initiated land use designation
alterations. The total encompasses sites that have previously been disturbed (rural or suburban) and appear to contribute nominally to the existing aesthetic of the area.

**Minor Aesthetic Effect:** A total of roughly 480 parcels encompassing nearly 1,580 acres were found to have minimal to minor potential for aesthetic effects. See Appendix EIR-3 for list. In general, these parcels include changes to less-intense land use designations, sites already significantly disturbed or developed low-intensity uses on large parcels or combinations of these. In all cases, the proposed land uses were found to be consistent with that of the surrounding area.

Of the various policy area and study area changes included in GPA No. 960, several would potentially have minor aesthetic impact potential, for the same reasons listed above. These include: Meadowbrook and Good Hope Rural Village Study Areas (RVSAs), the proposed Northeast Business Park overlay and areas of scattered Land Use Designation changes associated with Flabob, Blythe and Riverside Municipal Airports. Potential future commercial development in rural areas permitted by the new Incidental Rural Commercial policy also falls into this category, though specific locations affected by this policy cannot be foreseen at this time.

In each of these cases, the potential land use changes would be consistent with existing development patterns and existing levels of disturbances on and around the areas. As a result, future development would generally represent a continuation of existing types and levels of aesthetic impacts (for example, development of residential lots amid scattered existing residences), rather than new, substantial impacts. There are minimal to minor aesthetic impacts associated with this category of effect. However, site-specific analysis required at the time of future development implementation would ensure that these impacts would be less than significant. Existing County of Riverside regulations and processing procedures, as well as General Plan policies, would further ensure that future development proposals in these areas consider and avoid potential aesthetic impacts. See Section 4.4.6 (Aesthetic and Visual Resources – Impacts and Mitigation) for full details on impacts and mitigation.

**Possible Aesthetic Effect:** Approximately 13 parcels encompassing nearly 400 acres were found to have the potential for major visible aesthetic impacts. See Appendix EIR-3 for list. In all but three cases, this is due to the change of land use designation from OS-CH, which does not allow any development, to a use that allows at least a minimal level of development, most commonly Open Space-Rural (OS-RUR), which allows one home per 20 acres. Such LUD changes were necessary to ensure that lands under private ownership have at least minimal development potential and the OS-RUR designation is the least-intense possible land use designation for residential use. Nevertheless, most of the sites falling into this category are located in, or immediately adjacent to, large expanses of scenic open space. Some are consistent with surrounding development patterns, but are located on the outer fringes of the developing area, adjacent to large areas of open space. It is for these reasons that parcels in this category may require discretionary actions related to aesthetics protection as part of any future development proposals. The nature and scope of such measures are discussed under Section 4.4.6, below. One policy area, Lakeland Village, which spans roughly 65 acres on nearly 300 parcels, is also included in this category because of its location surrounding Lake Elsinore.

**C. Effects on Scenic Highways**

Of all of the parcel-specific changes proposed under GPA No. 960, only one lies in proximity to a State-designated scenic highway. This project component encompasses approximately 36 acres on 10 parcels amidst the forests outside Idyllwild. The parcels are proposed to change from OS-CH to OS-RUR and are located in proximity to State Route 243 which winds through the San Jacinto Mountains. However, due to the proposed large lot sizes, parcel locations and existing development pattern (numerous large-lot single-family residences and dirt roads already occur immediately adjacent to the subject 36 acres), the proposed changes would not result in a significant adverse effect to the State scenic highway.
A number of parcel changes are also proposed along or near eligible scenic highways, including proposed Rural Residential uses in the Lake Elsinore region along Interstate 15 and Highway 74; proposed Medium-Density Residential development off Highway 74 in the Winchester/ Harvest Valley region and the changing of sites from Rural Desert to Rural Residential along State Route 111, on the east side of the Salton Sea. In total, this category includes nearly 80 parcels (570 acres). All of these proposed changes were found to have either minor or no impact potential for aesthetics due to similar uses nearby.

In addition to the parcel-specific issues discussed above, analysis was also made of the large-scale, non-specific land use changes included as part of GPA No. 960, such as new or revised Policy Areas, Rural Village Overlays and the like. Of these areas, it was found that none occur in proximity to any California scenic highways, but several occur near State- and County-eligible highways.

Specifically, along State-eligible Highway 74, the deletion of the El Cariso Rural Village Study Area and the Agriculture/Potential Development Special Policy Area would limit development potential to existing General Plan land use designations in these areas. Effects would be reduced by the proposed removal of the mechanisms that would have allowed more intense land use designations. Similarly, the deletion of the Aguanga Rural Village Study Area would limit development in the area lying along County-eligible Highway 79, as well as a small stretch of State-eligible Highway 79 running south of Highway 371 to the San Diego County border. All of these changes would have either minor or no effect on area aesthetics and scenic resources.

Along Highway 74, the Good Hope and Meadowbrook Rural Village Study Areas would be replaced with overlays providing specific alternate Land Use Designations to accommodate the anticipated urbanization of the region. These changes provide two or more possible land use options under the General Plan, which may ultimately increase development in these areas. The Ramona Expressway, also a County-eligible highway, would be affected by future development within the proposed Northeast Business Park Overlay in the Lakeview/Nuevo area. In the Blythe area, development within the area subject to the Airport Influence Area has the potential to be visible from Interstate 10, which is also a County-eligible scenic highway. Lastly, incidental rural commercial development potential may affect undetermined future sites, some of which may include locations along State-designated or eligible scenic highways, as well as County-eligible scenic highways.

These larger-scale changes may have potential for environmental impacts associated with this category of effect. However, these impacts would be rendered less than significant with the mitigation provided through regulatory compliance. Specifically, existing County of Riverside regulations and processing procedures, as well as General Plan polices, would further ensure that future development proposals in these areas consider and avoid potential impacts to scenic highways. See Section 4.4.6 for full details on impacts and mitigation.

D. Light, Glare and Effects on Palomar Observatory

As outlined above in Section 4.4.5, many of the proposed land use designation changes, overlays and policy area amendments would allow for the conversion of rural, semi-rural, agricultural and vacant lands into suburban or urban uses throughout Riverside County. Future development of the parcels changed pursuant to GPA No. 960 would contribute to changing the visual character of Riverside County over a period of time. Lighting associated with higher intensity and density uses may adversely affect nighttime and daylight glare on existing residential areas and add to existing commercial and light industrial development. Development on any of the parcels changed or affected by GPA No. 960 would contribute to the overall increase in light levels and skyglow within Riverside County.

For the Palomar Observatory, the County of Riverside has established two zones of potential lighting (skyglow) effects. The first, Zone A, extends 15 miles around Palomar Observatory. Due to its proximity, excessive
lighting within Zone A has the greatest potential to adversely affect Observatory operations. Among the foreseeable land use-related components of GPA No. 960, a total of approximately 20 acres would potentially be subject to future development within the Rancho California area, approximately 240 acres within the Aguanga area and up to 750 acres in the Anza area, as well as the area covered by the proposed Anza Policy Area itself. Within these areas, compliance with existing lighting control policies and ordinances, Ordinance No. 655, in particular, would be necessary to ensure additional skyglow does not adversely affect the scientific operations at Palomar Observatory. Parcels within Zone B, the 45-mile radius, are more numerous and would also comply with the applicable regulations to ensure appropriate control of any night lighting or skyglow.

These changes may have potential for environmental impacts associated with this category of effect. However, these impacts would be less than significant with the mitigation provided through regulatory compliance. Specifically, existing County of Riverside regulations and processing procedures, as well as General Plan policies, would further ensure future development proposals in these areas consider and avoid potential impacts due to light and glare. See Section 4.4.6 for full details on impacts and mitigation.

4.4.6 Aesthetic and Visual Resources - Impacts and Mitigation

A. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Impact 4.4.A – Adversely Affect Scenic Vistas: Future development consistent with the changes proposed by GPA No. 960 would increase rural, suburban and urban uses in select portions of the county, adversely affecting scenic vistas in some areas. Compliance with existing laws, regulatory programs, General Plan policies and existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.1A from EIR No. 441, help reduce potential impacts to scenic resources. Compliance with these, plus a new project-specific mitigation measure (4.4.A-N1) would ensure that future development accommodated by the project would have a less than significant impact on scenic vistas.

1. Analysis of Impact 4.4.A

Scenic vistas occur throughout the county and would potentially be affected by future development activities authorized pursuant to the revised land use designations and policies resulting from GPA No. 960. In some locations, changes to land use designations proposed under GPA No. 960 would allow future development projects that would result in the physical conversion of open space, vacant and agricultural lands to more urban types of uses. In a few areas, as outlined in Section 4.4.5, these conversions could contribute to the substantial alteration of existing scenic vistas or reduce access to these viewsheds.

As outlined above in Section 4.4.5, a total of approximately 400 acres scattered throughout eastern and western Riverside County were found to have potential for major visible aesthetic effects. Most of these sites are located in, or immediately adjacent to, large expanses of scenic open space. These sites generally have limited access and the construction of roads leading to them would involve extending disturbances into areas of undeveloped viewsheds. For parcels in eastern Riverside County, this generally would mean affecting viewsheds of open, trackless desert or hills. In western Riverside County, this would mean affecting open views of local foothills or mountains.

The development of structures and facilities, particularly on vacant properties, is required to be consistent with the policies and regulatory programs outlines in the General Plan. Similarly, the replacement, expansion or refurbishment of existing development would also be required to conform to these policies and programs.
on their location, extent, density and configuration, future development consistent with General Plan changes made by GPA No. 960 could alter the characteristics of a local or regional viewshed or visual resource. This may also be the case for future development or infrastructure improvements that may occur in conjunction with project build out at locations not foreseeable at this time, including the introduction of incidental rural-commercial uses.

For the above reasons, a small subset of parcels and policy items arising from GPA No. 960 were found likely to require regulatory actions related to aesthetics protection as part of any future development proposals. As a group, the regulatory compliance measures outlined below would serve to reduce various potential aesthetic impacts, as indicated, for new development proposals, regardless of location. In addition, a new project-specific Mitigation Measure (4.4.A-N1) is also included to address this impact. All of these measures are assigned on a discretionary basis as a result of subsequent site-specific CEQA review. Together they would ensure that potential impacts to viewsheds and scenic vistas would be less than significant.

2. Regulatory Compliance for Impact 4.4.A

As explained below, compliance with the following existing laws, regulatory programs and General Plan policies would aid in avoiding or reducing potentially significant impacts to scenic vistas and viewsheds as a result of GPA No. 960.

a. Compliance with Riverside County Regulations

Several local regulations would reduce impacts related to substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas. These include, but are not limited to, the following: Riverside County Ordinance No. 460, which regulates the division of land within the county; Ordinance No. 461, which regulates road improvement standards and specifications for Riverside County right-of-ways and Riverside County Design Guidelines, which detail specific standards that establish and protect the aesthetic value of certain identified communities. Through these programs and ordinance standards, development near scenic vistas that would have the potential to adversely affect scenic vistas are highly regulated and addressed at various levels of Riverside County’s review process.

Ordinance No. 460 – Regulating the Division of Land: This ordinance regulates the division of land in unincorporated Riverside County, including any improvements associated with the division. In relation to scenic highways and vistas, Ordinance No. 460 requires that the installation of electrical and communication distribution lines “be underground when alignments parallel or cross scenic highways, natural scenic and historic sites… when it is deemed feasible,” to protect scenic vistas and highways.

Ordinance No. 461 – Road Improvement Standards and Specifications: This ordinance regulates and implements standards and engineering specifications for roads, bridges and other transportation-related facilities. This ordinance ultimately reinforces and details specific road standards for the regulations set in place by Ordinance No. 460, as well as ensuring that the road right-of-way is kept clear for the traveling public, therefore protecting the scenic highway designation.

Riverside County Design Guidelines: County Design Guidelines provide guidance for the aesthetic development of communities as envisioned by the community itself. County Design Guidelines uphold the visions for these communities by creating development standards which may include guidance for scale, intensity, architectural design, landscaping, light fixtures, sidewalks, trails, community logo, signage and other visual design features of a project. Application of these design standards would further ensure that potential aesthetic impacts are less than significant for development proposals.
Section 4.4 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

b. Compliance with Existing General Plan Policies

Of the General Plan Policies listed in Section 4.4.3.C, above, the policies below provide mitigation that would reduce the impacts of future growth and development within the county on scenic vistas.

Policies LU 14.3, 14.4, 14.5, 14.8, 16.4, 16.5, 16.12, 19.1, 28.6, 28.10, 29.9, 30.8 and 31.5: These policies directly address avoiding impacts to scenic vistas by requiring that future development be designed in such a manner that the visual aspects within a particular area are enhanced and not degraded. Specific development standards such as setback and grading requirements are set forth in these policies in order to protect scenic vistas as well as those policies set in place for the protection of open space in order to ensure reduced impacts to scenic vistas.

Policies LU 14.6 and 14.7: These two policies specifically address the protection of scenic vistas through the regulation of signage, including outdoor advertising displays for Riverside County.

Policies C 5.3 and C 19.1: These policies address circulation-related issues such as parking and maintaining those roadways that have been designated as official or eligible scenic highways.

c. Compliance With Proposed New or Revised General Plan Policies

The following revised policy of the Riverside County General Plan will further prevent significant impacts to scenic vistas. See Section 4.4.3.C for full text of this policy.

Policy LU 4.1: This policy directly addresses avoiding impacts to scenic vistas by requiring that future development be designed in such a manner that the visual aspects within a particular area are enhanced and not degraded. Specific development standards such as setback and grading requirements are set forth in these policies in order to protect scenic vistas as well as those policies set in place for the protection of open space in order to ensure reduced impacts to scenic vistas.

d. Compliance with Existing Mitigation Measures from EIR No. 441

In EIR No. 441, which was certified for the 2003 RCIP General Plan, it was determined that in order to reduce impacts associated with scenic vistas, mitigation would be necessary. The mitigation measure listed below is from EIR No. 441 and shall also apply as part of the mitigation for Program EIR No. 521.

Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.1A: Development projects shall be subject to the requirements of all relevant guidelines, including the community center guidelines, Riverside County supervisorial district guidelines and all applicable standards, policies and/or regulations of the County of Riverside or other affected entities pertaining to scenic vistas and aesthetic resources. Factors considered in these guidelines include the scale, extent, height, bulk or intensity of development; the location of development; the type, style and intensity of adjacent land uses; the manner and method of construction, including materials, coatings and landscaping; the interim and/or final use of the development; the type, location and manner of illumination and signage; the nature and extent of terrain modification required; and the potential effects to the established visual characteristic of the project site and identified scenic vista or aesthetic resource.

3. Additional Mitigation Measure for Impact 4.4.A

As detailed below, a new mitigation measure is proposed in order to further reduce potential adverse impacts related to scenic vistas pursuant to GPA No. 960. For parcels in which future development would potentially
result in a major visible effect to an existing viewshed or significant aesthetic feature, the following new project mitigation measure shall be required. Compliance with this measure would ensure a potentially significant impact is avoided by preventing inappropriate development in scenic areas.

**NEW Mitigation Measure 4.4.A-N1:** No development shall be approved for parcels without adequate legal access and adequate physical access. Adequate and accessible circulation facilities must also exist to meet the demand of the proposed land use.

4. **Finding on Significance for Impact 4.4.A**

Compliance with the above existing regulations, programs, policies and existing mitigation measures, including new Mitigation Measure 4.4.A-N1, would ensure that impacts to scenic vistas associated with future development consistent with the proposed project would be less than significant.

**B. Would the project substantially damage trees, rock outcroppings and historical buildings within a State scenic highway?**

**Impact 4.4.B – Adversely Affect Scenic Resources Within State Scenic Highways:** Future activities consistent with GPA No. 960 would increase development of rural, suburban and urban uses, potentially substantially damaging scenic resources in some areas. Compliance with existing regulatory programs, General Plan policies and existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.1A from EIR No. 441 would reduce potential impacts to scenic resources to less than significant.

1. **Analysis of Impact 4.4.B**

Scenic resources occur throughout Riverside County and would potentially be affected by development activities consistent with the revised land use designations and policies of GPA No. 960. The land use-related changes proposed under GPA No. 960 would allow for future development projects that would result in the physical conversion of open space, vacant and agricultural lands to more urban types of uses. These conversions could contribute to the substantial alteration of existing scenic resources on or in the vicinity of individual sites.

As outlined in Section 4.4.5, previously, in areas located in, or immediately adjacent to, large expanses of scenic open space have the greatest potential for adverse effects to scenic resources, as such areas tend to contain undisturbed or minimally-altered naturally-occurring scenic resources, such as individual trees and stands, ponds, lakes, waterfalls and wetlands, rocks, groupings of boulders and other scenic geological features.

In addition, impacts to aesthetic resources can include changes in the built environment, particularly to historic structures that capture the aesthetic of bygone eras. This is most readily apparent for historic buildings along a State scenic highway. GPA No. 960 land use changes include only one site located near a State scenic highway, Highway 243 in the San Jacinto Mountains outside of Idyllwild. The 36-acre site consists of 13 parcels of forested land, some of which are sited with single large-lot homes.

Besides the “possible effect” category, there are also sites from the “minor effect” category that may have potential for adverse impacts to the aesthetics of the built environment, including historic structures or other notable man-made features. This category, in particular, includes sites located in rural and less-dense suburban areas. Such areas may have a greater potential for historic structures, such as those associated with Riverside County’s long agrarian past.
Section 4.4  Aesthetics and Visual Resources

The development of structures and facilities, particularly on vacant properties, would be required to be consistent with the policies and regulatory programs outlined in the General Plan (see below). Similarly, the replacement, expansion or refurbishment of existing development, including any historic buildings or scenic structures, and any within a scenic highway, would also be required to conform to these policies and programs. Based on its location, extent, density and configuration, future development consistent with the General Plan changes made by GPA No. 960 would be subject to existing laws and regulations to ensure that no significant impacts would occur.

For the above reasons, parcels and policy items arising from GPA No. 960 from both the “possible effect” and “minor effect” categories potentially require regulatory actions related to aesthetics protection as part of any future development approvals. As a group, the regulatory compliance measures outlined below would serve to reduce potential aesthetic impacts for all new development proposals, regardless of location. As such, they would ensure that potential aesthetic impacts remain less than significant.

2. Regulatory Compliance for Impact 4.4.B

The above analysis indicates this impact would be less than significant and hence no project-specific mitigation is needed. Moreover, compliance with the following regulatory programs, General Plan policies and existing EIR No. 441 mitigation measure would ensure that adverse impacts to trees, rock outcroppings and historical buildings within a State scenic highway are less than significant. Through these policies and programs, development near trees, rock outcroppings and historical buildings within State scenic highways are regulated and addressed at all levels of Riverside County’s development review process.

a. Compliance with State and County Regulations

State and local regulations exist that would reduce impacts related to trees, rock outcroppings and historical buildings within a State scenic highway, including, but not limited to, the following:

California Scenic Highway Program: This program of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) provides for the designation of scenic or eligible scenic highways and corridors to enhance and protect the natural scenic beauty along California’s highways. It includes development standards for official scenic highways and also requires that local governments establish and implement standards that promote and protect the appearance of the scenic highway. Local governments are required to protect the visual character of a site and its surroundings through the development of standards that include:

- Regulation of land use and density of development (i.e., density classifications and types of allowable land uses).
- Detailed land and site planning (i.e., permit or design review authority and regulations for the review of proposed developments).
- Control of outdoor advertising (i.e., prohibition of off-premise advertising signs and control of on-premise advertising signs).
- Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping (i.e., grading ordinances, grading permits, design review authority, landscaping and vegetation requirements).
• Regulating the design and appearance of structures and equipment (i.e., design review authority and regulations for the placement of utility structures, microwave receptors, wireless communication towers, etc.).

Riverside County currently addresses the protection of scenic highways through the implementation of programs and ordinances that address each of these five standards. The County of Riverside addresses the regulation of land use and the density of development through the General Plan’s Land Use Designations (LUDs). The LUDs are separated into five Foundation Components that guide the pattern of development and the extent of land uses. Detailed site and land planning, along with the control of outdoor advertising displays, are regulated through Riverside County’s Land Use Ordinance No. 348. This ordinance regulates specific land uses and associated development standards to ensure consistency with Riverside County’s General Plan. Riverside County Ordinance No. 457, Building Codes and Fees Ordinance, regulates and controls earthmoving, while Ordinance No. 859 regulates landscaping within the county. Lastly, a number of Community Design Guidelines address the design and appearance of structures and equipment in the county in order to ensure a consistent character within individual communities. Ordinance No. 348 (Section 19.400) also addresses cell towers and related equipment, including aesthetic standards for such sites.

Ordinance No. 348 - Land Use Ordinance of Riverside County: As mentioned previously, this ordinance establishes allowable uses of land and sets standards for what and how land may be developed. In regards to aesthetics, Ordinance No. 348 specifically requires that all Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS) maintain specific setbacks from all State- or County-eligible or designated scenic highways, thereby reducing potential adverse impacts to scenic highways.

Ordinance No. 460 - Regulating the Division of Land: This ordinance regulates the division of land in unincorporated Riverside County, including any improvements associated with the division. In relation to scenic highways and vistas, Ordinance No. 460 requires that installation of electrical and communication distribution lines “be underground when alignments parallel or cross scenic highways, natural scenic and historic sites…when it is deemed feasible,” in order to protect these scenic resources. As scenic highways and vistas add to the visual character of a site and its surroundings, this ordinance also reduces potential adverse impacts to the visual character of those areas impacted by the project.

Ordinance No. 461 - Road Improvement Standards and Specifications: No. 461 regulates and implements standards and engineering specifications for roads, bridges and other transportation-related facilities. This ordinance ultimately reinforces and details specific road standards for the regulations set in place by Ordinance No. 460 as well as ensuring that road rights-of-way are kept clear for the traveling public, therefore protecting scenic highway designations as well as maintaining the visual character of an area.

Riverside County Design Guidelines: Riverside County Design Guidelines (as set forth in General Plan Appendix J, among others) provide guidance for the aesthetic development of communities as envisioned by the community itself. Riverside County Design Guidelines uphold the visions for these communities by creating development standards which may include guidance for scale, intensity, architectural design, landscaping, light fixtures, sidewalks, trails, community logo, signage and other visual design features of a project. Application of these design standards would further ensure that potential impacts to the visual character of an area are less than significant for development proposals.

Riverside County Oak Trees Design Guidelines: These guidelines address the treatment of parcels with existing oak tree resources as well as design provisions for development of those parcels. The guidelines protect oak trees as a scenic resource in a number of ways including, but not limited to, requiring a biological study of onsite vegetation, encouraging development to be designed in a manner where any disturbed land avoids oak trees
as well as the protected zone of any oak tree. Compliance with these guidelines would reduce potential impacts to less than significant.

b. Compliance with Existing General Plan Policies

Of the General Plan policies listed in Section 4.4.3.C above, several in particular provide mitigation for impacts associated with development near trees, rock outcroppings and historical buildings within a State scenic highway. Implementation of these General Plan policies would reduce even further the impacts of future growth and development upon these scenic resources. Specifically:

Policies OS 9.3 and 9.4: These policies directly address this impact by conserving trees and native vegetation for aesthetic purposes among other reasons. As such, they protect existing visual resources within Riverside County from the effects of future development.

c. Compliance with Proposed New or Revised General Plan Policies

Policy LU 4.5: This policy directly addresses allowing historical buildings to vary from regulatory codes in order to preserve the historical character of Riverside County, thereby maintaining existing aesthetic resources within Riverside County and further reducing impacts.

Policy C 20.1: This policy directly addresses this impact by conserving trees and native vegetation for aesthetic purposes among other reasons. As such, they protect existing visual resources within Riverside County from the effects of future development.

d. Compliance with Existing Mitigation Measures from EIR No. 441

For the same reasons as for Impact 4.4.A, Mitigation Measure 4.4.1A from EIR No. 441 also applies here. Hence, this measure is also included as an existing programmatic compliance measure for this project as well.

3. Finding on Significance for Impact 4.4.B

Compliance with the above regulatory programs, policies and mitigation measures would ensure that trees, rock outcroppings and historical buildings within a State scenic highway are not adversely impacted by this project or future development. As a result, impacts to trees, rock outcroppings and historical buildings within a State scenic highway would be less than significant.

C. Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or aesthetic quality of a site and its surroundings?

Impact 4.4.C – Adversely Affect Existing Visual Character: The existing visual character or aesthetic quality of some sites affected by the proposed project may be altered by future activities consistent with proposed GPA No. 960 land use changes. Compliance with existing regulatory programs, existing General Plan policies, existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.1A from EIR No. 441 and new project-specific Mitigation Measure 4.4.A-N1 would ensure that potential adverse impacts to visual character resulting from GPA No. 960 are less than significant.
1. **Analysis of Impact 4.4.C**

   It is anticipated that future activities consistent with GPA No. 960 land use changes would slightly increase the amount of urban development within Riverside County. Where such development occurs on vacant, undeveloped and generally open land, this would potentially degrade the existing visual character in some areas. This includes many of the GPA No. 960-affected sites categorized with “possible effect” potential. On these sites, long-term aesthetic impacts would be primarily associated with the change in visual character resulting from conversion of previously vacant lands to developed uses. This would be particularly noticeable in areas that currently are predominantly rural, agricultural or vacant (open space).

   The proposed land use overlays and new land use designations would include a combination of low to medium-high density residential, commercial, light industrial, office and business park uses, civic uses, transit facilities, recreational uses and open space uses. The Rural Incidental Commercial and Sphere of Influence policies would allow for small-scale commercial uses and suburban residential lots in rural and semi-rural areas. This may significantly change the visual character of sites and surrounding areas. However, the specific locations in which this may occur as a result of the new policies cannot be foreseen at this time. Thus, any potential future impacts must be addressed programmatically.

   Based on its location, extent, density and configuration, future development may alter the characteristics of a locally or regionally significant visual resource. Development proposed in areas subject to adopted Design Guidelines shall be required to comply with the aesthetic measures of those guidelines. Such sites would be subject to County of Riverside design review, as appropriate to their nature and location, to ensure aesthetic impacts have been ameliorated. Compliance with existing regulations, EIR No. 441 mitigation measures and new project-specific Mitigation Measure 4.4.A-N1 would ensure that impacts are less than significant.

2. **Regulatory Compliance for Impact 4.4.C**

   As detailed and explained below, compliance with the following regulations, programs and General Plan policies are sufficient to ensure that adverse impacts associated with visual character as a result of GPA No. 960 would be less than significant for the majority of the affected areas within Riverside County. The previously discussed 400 acres (13 parcels) of land that have been identified as having the potential for major visible aesthetic impacts, plus any site not presently foreseeable arising as the General Plan builds out, would be reduced to less than significant through the mitigation of proposed New Mitigation Measure 4.4.A-N1, as well as the existing regulations, programs and General Plan policies described below.

   a. **Compliance with Riverside County Regulations**

   Local regulations exist that would reduce impacts related to substantial adverse effects on the visual character of an area. These include, but are not limited to, the following: Ordinance No. 460, Ordinance No. 461 and the Riverside County Design Guidelines. Through these programs and ordinance standards, developments that would have the potential to adversely affect the visual character of an area are highly regulated and addressed at various levels of Riverside County’s review process.

   **Ordinance No. 348 - Land Use Ordinance of Riverside County**: Among other things, this ordinance protects the people and property of Riverside County from development of unsuitable land uses and aims to ensure that built areas are developed safely and with minimal conflict with surrounding lands. In regards to the existing visual character and aesthetic quality of a site and its surroundings, Ordinance No. 348 identifies requirements for landscaping associated with development proposals. The landscaping of development projects
enhances the visual character and aesthetic quality of a site and its surroundings, thereby maintaining and many
times improving the existing visual character and aesthetic quality of a site.

**Ordinance No. 457 - Building Codes and Fees Ordinance:** In relation to the existing visual character and
aesthetic quality of an area, Ordinance No. 457 requires development projects that involve cut and fill slopes of
particular vertical heights to be landscaped in order to provide proper erosion control measures. Erosion control
landscaping plans must be submitted to and approved by the Riverside County Building and Safety Department
prior to installation. Landscaping these cut and fill slopes enhances the existing visual character and aesthetic
quality of sites and the surrounding areas.

**Ordinance No. 460 - Regulating the Division of Land:** In relation to scenic highways and vistas, Ordinance
No. 460, requires that installation of electrical and communication distribution lines “be underground when
alignments parallel or cross scenic highways, natural scenic and historic sites…when it is deemed feasible,” in
order to protect these scenic resources. As scenic highways and vistas add to the visual character of a site and its
surroundings, this ordinance also reduces potential adverse impacts to the visual character of those areas impacted
by the project.

**Ordinance No. 461 - Road Improvement Standards and Specifications:** This ordinance ultimately reinforces
and details specific road standards for the regulations set in place by Ordinance No. 460 as well as ensuring that
road rights-of-way are kept clear for the traveling public, therefore protecting scenic highway designations as well
as maintaining the visual character of an area.

**Riverside County Design Guidelines:** Riverside County Design Guidelines (as set forth in General Plan
Appendix J, among others) provide guidance for the aesthetic development of communities as envisioned by the
community itself. Riverside County Design Guidelines uphold the visions for these communities by creating
development standards which may include guidance for scale, intensity, architectural design, landscaping, light
fixtures, sidewalks, trails, community logo, signage and other visual design features of a project. Application of
such design standards would further ensure that potential impacts to the visual character of an area are less than
significant for development proposals.

**b. Compliance with Existing General Plan Policies**

Implementation of the General Plan policies listed in Section 4.4.3.C provide mitigation for impacts associated
with the visual character of an area and would reduce the impacts of future growth and development in Riverside
County on visual character. Specifically:

**Policy LU 14.8:** This policy directly addresses preserving the visual character of an area by prohibiting the
blocking of public views by solid walls and thereby maintaining visual character.

**c. Compliance with Proposed New or Revised General Plan Policies**

The following revised policy of the Riverside County General Plan will further prevent significant impacts that
would adversely affect existing visual character. See Section 4.4.3.C for full text of each.

**Policy LU 4.1:** This policy directly addresses avoiding adverse impacts to the visual character of an area by
requiring that new developments be located and designed to visually enhance and not degrade the character of the
surrounding area through a number of concepts including, preserving the natural features, such as unique natural
terrain, drainage ways and native vegetation, wherever possible.
d. **Compliance with Existing Mitigation Measures from EIR No. 441**

For the same reasons as for Impact 4.4.A, existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.1A from EIR No. 441 also applies here. Hence, this measure is also included as an existing programmatic compliance measure for this project as well.

**3. Additional Mitigation Measures for Impact 4.4.C**

As detailed below, a new mitigation measure is being proposed in order to further reduce potential adverse impacts related to scenic vistas. For parcels in which future development would potentially result in a major visible effect to an existing viewshed or significant aesthetic feature, new project-specific Mitigation Measure 4.4.A-N1, as set forth under Impact 4.4.A, above, shall be required. Compliance with this measure would ensure a potentially significant impact is avoided by preventing inappropriate development in scenic areas.

**4. Finding on Significance for Impact 4.4.C**

With the implementation of, and compliance with, the above-listed existing regulations, programs and General Plan policies, including existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.1A from EIR No. 441, plus newly proposed Mitigation Measure 4.4.A-N1, GPA No. 960 would have less than significant impacts on the existing visual character. Aesthetic quality impacts and impacts resulting from conversion of open space or undisturbed areas to developed uses would also be reduced to less than significant.

**D. Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the areas?**

**Impact 4.4.D – Cause Adverse Light and Glare Effects:** Future development consistent with GPA No. 960 would introduce new sources of light and glare which would adversely affect day and/or nighttime views in some areas. Compliance with a variety of existing regulatory programs, including General Plan policies and existing measures from EIR No. 441, would ensure that light and glare impacts to views are less than significant.

**1. Analysis of Impact 4.4.D**

Future development consistent with the land use changes of GPA No. 960 would increase the effects of light and glare on existing and future residences in some areas. New light and glare would arise from the addition of residences, commercial uses, public facilities and other structures. Light and glare would be emitted by developed uses with artificial lighting, for example, parking lots, commercial landscaped areas, exterior signage, interior building lighting and residential yards. Signage that is lit at night and visible from roadways is also a particular issue.

Light from all of these new uses would also contribute to nighttime light pollution levels and skyglow, i.e., the overall lightening of the night sky resulting from illumination of air and water particles in the atmosphere. Glare, that is, reflected sunlight or artificial light that interferes with vision or navigation may also arise from any of these sources, as well as from the use of reflective materials on building exteriors. Certain industrial processes and agricultural facilities, such as fish ponds or solar farms, can also be significant sources of glare.

Sites categorized with “possible effect” for aesthetic impacts are also generally those most likely to contribute to potentially significant nighttime lighting impacts due to their locations in previously undisturbed open areas or
along urbanizing fringes. Sites on either the “minor effect” or “nominal effect” lists would also potentially introduce new sources of light and glare to their locales, particularly where increased intensities are proposed. However, because of the urban or suburban nature of most of these sites and their typically nominal aesthetic value, individual site impacts would be less than significant. Nevertheless, all development from GPA No. 960 would contribute incrementally to the cumulative light pollution levels and skyglow experienced in Riverside County and Southern California.

2. Regulatory Compliance for Impact 4.4.D

As explained below, compliance with the following existing regulations, design guidelines, General Plan policies and existing EIR No. 441 mitigation measures are sufficient to ensure adverse effects associated with light and glare impacts as a result of GPA No. 960 would be less than significant.

a. Compliance with Federal, State and County Regulations

Local regulations that would reduce impacts related to light and glare include, but are not limited to, Riverside County Ordinance No. 461, which includes standards for residential lighting, as well as lighting for highways, roadways, intersections and traffic signage, and Ordinance No. 655, which addresses standards for acceptable nighttime lighting within Riverside County and protection of the Palomar Observatory. The following County of Riverside regulations would also aid in reducing impacts:

Ordinance No. 348 - Land Use Ordinance of Riverside County: In regards to new sources of light and glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views, Ordinance No. 348 specifically requires compliance with Ordinance No. 655 and identifies standards related to lighting for signs, outdoor advertising displays, mini-warehouses and recreational vehicle parks. Compliance with Ordinance No. 348 reduces potential adverse impacts to the day or nighttime views from light and glare.

Ordinance No. 461 - Road Improvement Standards and Specifications: This ordinance includes standards for residential lighting, as well as lighting for highways, roadways, intersections and traffic signage, requiring that all lighting standards, including private residential lighting comply with Ordinance No. 655. Compliance with this ordinance would further reduce any potential adverse light and glare impacts as a result of future development from the project.

Ordinance No. 655 - Regulating Light Pollution: This ordinance addresses standards for acceptable nighttime lighting within Riverside County and measures related to development within 15-45 miles of the Palomar Observatory by requiring the usage of low pressure sodium lamps for outdoor lighting fixtures and regulating the hours of operation for commercial/industrial uses in order to reduce lighting impacts on the observatory. Compliance with Ordinance No. 655 would further reduce potential light and glare impacts.

Ordinance No. 915 - Regulating Outdoor Lighting: The intent of this ordinance is to establish a countywide standard for outdoor lighting that would generally prohibit light trespass and protect the health, property and well-being of Riverside County’s residents. The ordinance regulates light trespass in areas that fall outside of the 45-mile radius of Ordinance No. 655 (see above). It requires all outdoor luminaries to be located, adequately shielded and directed such that no direct light falls outside the parcel of origin or onto the public right-of-way. Compliance with Ordinance No. 915 would further reduce potential light and glare impacts.

Riverside County Design Guidelines: Application of the Riverside County Design Guidelines would further ensure that impacts associated with lighting and glare are less than significant for development proposals resulting
from GPA No. 960. For the same reasons as for Impact 4.4.A, and due to various standards set forth in the design guidelines requiring hooded, shielded or low-to-the-ground lighting. Standards for backlighting and indirect lighting to promote “night skies” are also included in the Guidelines and would reduce potential lighting and glaring impacts.

b. Compliance with Existing General Plan Policies

Of the General Plan Policies listed in Section 4.4.3.C, above, Policy LU 14.6, in particular provides mitigation for potential impacts associated with light and glare. This policy directly addresses prohibiting offsite outdoor advertising displays that are visible from designated and eligible scenic highways. By regulating billboards and signs, it would reduce the obstruction of visual resources from structures and from outdoor advertising displays. As a result, it would reduce any potential light or glare impacts resulting from future growth and development.

c. Compliance With Proposed New or Revised General Plan Policies

Revised Policy LU 4.1 would further prevent significant impacts associated with light and glare effects. It requires that new developments be located and designed to visually enhance and not degrade the character of the surrounding area through consideration of a number of concepts, including, mitigating noise, odor, lighting and other impacts on surrounding properties. This policy would ensure that potential light and glare impacts from new development are reviewed and addressed early on during the entitlement process. See Section 4.4.3.C for full text of the policy.

d. Compliance with Existing Mitigation Measures from EIR No. 441

In EIR No. 441, which was certified for the 2003 RCIP General Plan, it was determined that to fully reduce impacts associated with light and glare, several mitigation measures were also necessary. These mitigation measures from EIR No. 441 are listed below and shall also apply as part of the mitigation for this Program EIR No. 521.

**Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2A:** Riverside County shall require that sources of lighting within the General Plan area be limited to the minimum standard required to ensure safe circulation and visibility.

**Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2B:** Riverside County shall require street lighting to be limited to intersections and other locations that are needed to maintain safe access (e.g., sharp curves).

**Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2C:** Riverside County shall require exterior lighting for buildings to be of a low profile and intensity.

**Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2D:** The County [of Riverside] shall establish a liaison with California Institute of Technology [which operates the Palomar Observatory] to ensure “dark skies” preservation procedures are incorporated, as necessary, in future County ordinances.

**Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2E:** The County [of Riverside] shall participate in Palomar Observatory’s “dark sky” conservation area.
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3. Finding on Significance for Impact 4.4.D

With the implementation of, and compliance with, the above-listed regulations, design standards and guidelines, policies and existing mitigation measures, potential adverse visual resource impacts would be avoided, minimized or reduced. As a result, light and glare impacts associated with future development consistent with the proposed project would be less than significant.

E. Would the project interfere with the nighttime use of the Palomar Astronomical Observatory, as protected through Riverside County Ordinance No. 655?

Impact 4.4.E – Interfere with Nighttime Use of the Palomar Astronomical Observatory: Future development accommodated by GPA No. 960 would introduce new sources of light within 15-45 miles of the Palomar Observatory, which requires dark skies to function. New sources of light resulting from GPA No. 960 would also contribute incrementally to the overall skyglow of the region, which interferes with nighttime operations at the Observatory. Compliance with a variety of existing regulatory programs, including General Plan policies, County of Riverside ordinances, Ordinance No. 655 (Regulating Light Pollution) in particular, and existing measures from EIR No. 441, would ensure that light impacts on operations at Palomar Observatory are less than significant.

1. Analysis of Impact 4.4.E

Future development consistent with the land use changes resulting from GPA No. 960 would increase the amount of night lighting in the region and contribute incrementally to the region’s skyglow. New light would arise from the addition of a variety of new development, most particularly commercial uses with outdoor parking or lit signage. The scope and extent of lighting impacts anticipated as a result of GPA No. 960 are analyzed under Impact 4.4.D, above.

To ensure that nighttime skies would not be brightened, astronomical observatories generally need to be located at least 30 to 40 miles from large, lit urban areas. The Palomar Observatory is located approximately 5.5 miles south of the Riverside-San Diego county line. Originally, the observatory was located in a generally non-urbanized area. However, in the century since the observatory’s founding, southwestern Riverside County, particularly the cities of Temecula and Murrieta have grown significantly, greatly increasing the nighttime lighting and skyglow of the region in the process. While not located within Riverside County, astronomical observations at Palomar Observatory rely on dark skies and are affected by increases in light sources within Riverside County.

Some areas expected to develop consistent with GPA No. 960 changes are located within Zone A (15 miles or less from Palomar), including any future development within the Anza Policy Area, and many sites are located within Zone B (15 to 45 miles from the observatory). Sites within these restriction zones (Zones A and B) would be subject to protection and lighting restrictions under Ordinance No. 655. Compliance with this ordinance would ensure that additional light sources are not individually significant or contribute to cumulatively significant light increases in the region.

2. Regulatory Compliance for Impact 4.4.E

As detailed and explained below, compliance with the following existing regulations, programs, design standards and guidelines, General Plan policies and EIR No. 441 mitigation measures are sufficient to ensure that adverse effects associated with the Palomar Astronomical Observatory as a result of GPA No. 960 would be less than significant.
a. Compliance with Federal, State and County Regulations

Compliance with the following existing laws, regulatory programs, General Plan policies and existing mitigation measures are sufficient to ensure that adverse impacts associated with the Palomar Astronomical Observatory as a result of GPA No. 960 would be less than significant. Through these policies, programs and standards, development that would have the potential to adversely impact the observatory are highly regulated and addressed at all levels of Riverside County’s development review process.

Ordinance No. 348 - Land Use Ordinance of Riverside County: In regards to the Palomar Astronomical Observatory, this ordinance specifically requires compliance with Riverside County Ordinance No. 655 and identifies standards related to lighting for signs, outdoor advertising displays, mini-warehouses and recreational vehicle parks. Compliance with Ordinance No. 348 reduces potential adverse impacts to the Palomar Astronomical Observatory.

Ordinance No. 461 - Road Improvement Standards and Specifications: The ordinance includes standards for residential lighting, as well as lighting for highways, roadways, intersections and traffic signage. It also requires that all lighting standards, including private residential lighting, comply with Ordinance No. 655. Compliance with Ordinance No. 461 would further reduce any potential adverse light and glare impacts as a result of GPA No. 960 and future development.

Ordinance No. 655 - Regulating Light Pollution: This ordinance addresses standards for acceptable nighttime lighting within Riverside County and measures related to development within 15-45 miles of the Palomar Observatory by requiring the usage of low pressure sodium lamps for outdoor lighting fixtures and regulating the hours of operation for commercial/industrial uses in order to reduce lighting impacts on the Observatory. Both Zones A and B require the use of low-pressure sodium lamps, shielded outdoor lighting, restricted hours of operation as well as restrictions for outdoor advertising displays. The specific zone would also detail the lamp types, parking lot, walkway and security lighting as well as the decorative lighting that is allowable or prohibited for each zone. Compliance with Ordinance No. 655 would further reduce potential impacts to the Palomar Astronomical Observatory.

Riverside County Design Guidelines: Application of the Riverside County Design Guidelines would further ensure that impacts associated with lighting and glare are less than significant for development proposals resulting from GPA No. 960 for the same reasons as for Impact 4.4.A and due to various standards set forth in the design guidelines requiring hooded, shielded or low-to-the-ground lighting. Standards for backlighting and indirect lighting to promote “night skies” also included in the Guidelines in order to reduce effects on Palomar Astronomical Observatory.

b. Compliance With Proposed New or Revised General Plan Policies

Of the General Plan policies listed in Section 4.4.3.C, above, Policy LU 4.1, in particular provides mitigation for potential impacts associated with the Palomar Astronomical Observatory. Implementation of this General Plan policy related to the Observatory would reduce any potential impacts of future growth and development. Specifically:

Policy LU 4.1: This policy requires that new developments be located and designed to visually enhance and not degrade the character of the surrounding area through consideration of a number of concepts, including, mitigating noise, odor, lighting and other impacts to surrounding properties. This policy ensures that potential adverse impacts to the Palomar Observatory from new development would be reviewed and addressed early on during the entitlement process.
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c. Compliance with Existing Mitigation Measures from EIR No. 441

In EIR No. 441, prepared for the 2003 RCIP General Plan, five mitigation measures were adopted to reduce the impact of light and glare to less than significant levels. Since measures that reduce night lighting in general also serve to mitigate light impacts on the Palomar Observatory and because these measures remain applicable to the areas covered by GPA No. 960, continued compliance with these existing measures would also reduce impacts to the observatory.

Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2A: Riverside County shall require that sources of lighting within the General Plan area be limited to the minimum standard required to ensure safe circulation and visibility.

Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2B: Riverside County shall require street lighting to be limited to intersections and other locations that are needed to maintain safe access (e.g., sharp curves).

Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2C: Riverside County shall require exterior lighting for buildings to be of a low profile and intensity.

Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2D: The County [of Riverside] shall establish a liaison with California Institute of Technology [which operates the Palomar Observatory] to ensure “dark skies” preservation procedures are incorporated, as necessary, in future County ordinances.

Existing Mitigation Measure 4.4.2E: The County [of Riverside] shall participate in Mount [sic] Palomar Observatory’s “dark sky” conservation area.

3. Finding on Significance for Impact 4.4.E

Implementation of, and compliance with, the above listed regulations, design standards and guidelines, General Plan policies and existing mitigation measures would ensure that potential adverse impacts to the Palomar Astronomical Observatory are avoided, minimized or reduced. As a result, impacts to the Palomar Astronomical Observatory associated with future development accommodated by the proposed project would be less than significant.

4.4.7 Significance After Mitigation for Aesthetic and Visual Resources

Development and implementation activities resulting from the proposed project, General Plan Amendment No. 960, would be subject to a number of existing General Plan policies, existing Riverside County Ordinances, existing mitigation measures from EIR No. 441 and newly proposed project-specific Mitigation Measure 4.4.A-N1, as identified above. These mitigation and regulatory compliance measures would reduce to below the level of significance any potential adverse impacts to scenic vistas, scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings and historical buildings within State scenic highways, and the existing visual character and aesthetic quality of urban, suburban and other already-developed areas. They would also ensure that impacts associated with light and glare adversely affecting day or nighttime views, as well as nighttime use of Palomar Astronomical Observatory, are also less than significant. For impacts to the existing visual character and aesthetic quality of 400 acres that would transition from undisturbed open space to developed urban, suburban or rural uses as a result of GPA No. 960 and have the potential for major visible impacts, the above measures would
reduce impacts to less than significant. In total, all project-related visual and aesthetic effects would ultimately be less than significant with the mitigation cited.